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VI.—*The Zulu of Nyasaland: their Manners and Customs.* By the Rev. DONALD FRASER, of the Livingstonia Mission.

[Read before the Society, 20th February, 1901.]

101 I SHALL take you to-night into British Central Africa, and describe slightly, a most interesting nation of warriors who live in West Nyasaland. To reach them we sail up the Zambezi, and the 13 Shiré to Lake Nyasa. Landing at Bandawe, we strike inland for two days, climbing most of the way. After passing through richly wooded hills and valleys, we arrive at a great plateau, veined by constant sudden ravines through which rivers roar in the wet season, and trickle in the dry. The plateau is almost bared of trees, and is relieved by huge rocky hills which rise precipitously, from the plain. A low scrub covers the face of the land except where [241] gardens are being cultivated, and the whole country is dotted by innumerable ant hills, each as large as a cottage. These are hoed by the villagers, and throughout most of the year, stand out gaunt and bear. Then the landscape is thirsty and inhospitable looking. The earth baked and hard, lies unclothed in the blazing sun. Cattle, [231] sheep, and goats, wander about the river beds, and one looks almost in vain for any sign of vegetation to afford them food. But when the first rains come, the land breaks into smiling. The scrub puts on a dress of the softest green. The gardens and ant hills are [241] covered with springing maize, and a thick garment of foliage, vegetation, and flowers, hides every vestige of the ground. Here we stand from 4,000 to 5,000 feet above the level of the sea. In the cold season, the thermometer falls as low as 40°, and in the hot, rises as high as 98°. But though the sun has a dangerous bite in midsummer, the heat is never oppressive, and the nights are cool and refreshing.

101 The people who live in this country, are a branch of the Zulu 175 tribe, who started north 70 or 80 years ago on a great raid. The causes which led them to desert their own country are wrapped in mystery, and even the old men who can remember the days when they crossed the Zambezi, are unable to give any clear account of their starting. Probably it arose from one of the wars of Chaka, in

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which his army was defeated. The warriors knew that they would be killed when they got back to the great Zulu despot, and so they fled north, fighting as they went. As they went along, they conquered and absorbed the tribes, gathering Swazi, Atonga, and a medley of people into the nation. They came to the Zambezi, and on the day when they crossed it they were terrified by a total eclipse of the sun. From the Zambezi they fought their way to Nyasaland, then striking west, they passed through the Senga and Wemba populations till they reached Lake Tanganyika. On the plateau there the first great chief died. He had become infirm in his latter days, and travelled about riding on an ox. At his funeral a terrible massacre took place. One section of the tribe, eager to observe the old bloody funeral ceremonies, surprised and murdered all the widows of the chief that their spirits might accompany the dead chief to the other world. This butchery aroused great indignation among the others, and the tribe split in two. The butchers remained at the S.E. of Lake Tanganyika, where they still are a terror to the surrounding people. The great part of the tribe however, again marched south. One of the sons of the paramount chief was appointed his successor. His name was Mombera. His four brothers, Mpezeni, Mperembe, Maurau, and Mtwaro, were given large and powerful sub-chieftainships under him. This led to a scattering and readjustment of the tribe. Mperembe remained as chief and conquerer over the northern people, keeping the wild Wemba, and other tribes under his suzerainty. Mombera, along with two other brothers, settled in the highlands to the north-west of Nyasa. And Mpezeni went south and gradually got so far separated from the others that his people became an independent and insolated section of the tribe. A few years ago, the British Government levied war on Mpezeni, and his country came under the British Government.

In the north also, Mperembe was sore driven through his separation from the main section of the tribe, and at last his people rebelled, and with the aid of the Wemba, drove him south to join hands with his brother Mombera the paramount chief. Around Mombera the great part of the Ngoni nation remained. Some of his head men started petty chieftainships to the south among whom were Mandala, and Mwasi. Their people are called the Central and Southern Ngoni, and are well known in the Blantyre district as labourers, but they are not Ngoni. Few of them can speak the Zulu or Ngoni language, and they are a poor effeminate and cow-

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101 ardly people compared with the wild spirits who remained under
[175] Mombera.

This tribe is variously named Mazitu, Vikoko, Abangoni, and so on, and readers of Livingstone's 'Zambezi and its Tributaries,' will remember his frequent references to the wild marauding bands of Mazitu. The word Abangoni, by which the tribe calls itself,
[186] simply means "The people." They reckon themselves the blooded aristocrats of Africa.

[193] The prefix *aba* before ngoni, is simply the plural form of the noun *umgoni*, a single man. The country is called Ubungoni, and the language Chingoni. For the peculiarity of the Bantu languages, is that words alter their number from singular to plural, and character from noun to adjective, not by changing the suffix but the prefix.

197 The language which the Ngoni speak is a slight modification of Zulu—but they only use two clicks—the dental *c* and labial *q*. In our schools therefore we use the Zulu literature in which there are already nearly 40 volumes, and the best of these are the translations left by Bishop Colenso. Zulu is however rapidly dying
[560] out, as the language of the slaves and of the surrounding tribes is becoming the vernacular of the common people. When Mombera's
175 Ngoni settled down in the watershed of the Ruhuru, they soon made their presence disagreeably felt throughout West Nyasa.
[926] Their marauding parties were always out on the war path. Dressing in a frightsome garb of cock feathers, carrying a large shield and two or three stabbing assegais, they terrorised the neighbouring tribes. They used to sleep near some village which they wished to attack, and then in the early morning just before the light had come, with a wild war whoop they would sweep through the village, killing the men and the old people; then when they had seized the women and children and tied them together they would start back for the hills, driving with them all the cattle and sheep and goats that they could find. Their fighting was never done in the open. It generally took the form of a wild and sudden rush, and in a moment bleeding corpses were lying about, and the village was in flames.

The terrified people betook themselves to huge stockaded villages,
[101] others piled their villages in the lake itself. The Poka, and Henga fled to mountain fastnesses, and built on the edges of fearful precipices, the Senga fled to the Luangwa marsh and built great protected villages in the depths of huge thorn thickets. And the land became

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barren with terror, till a great belt of uninhabited territory surrounded Ngoniland on all sides. It was sad to pass through this rich land, left to the wild beasts, to see mouldering smelting furnaces, and other signs of lost industries.

It was when the tribe was still in the height of its devastating tendencies that the Livingstonia Mission came into the country. At first the early pioneers were barely tolerated, and more than once it seemed as if they would have to abandom everything and flee for their lives. But gradually, imperceptibly the preaching of peace began to sweeten and purify the atmosphere, and the horrors of these fighting days became part and parcel of a dreadful past. Three years ago a new paramount chief was elected. At the great council the wild spirits of the tribe tried to rouse the people to celebrate the coronation with a great raid. They danced, threatened and raved, but the younger chiefs, themselves Christians, spoke eloquently for peace, and in the end peace prevailed, and the death knell of the past was sounded. And now there is no more settled, peaceable, law-abiding people in Central Africa. And this victory has been won not by the rattle of Maxim guns, not even by the wisdom of diplomacy, but by the daily teaching of the Gospel of Peace.

The political structure of the tribe is strong and conservative. The father of all the people is the paramount chief. His authority has descended to him through a long line of ancestors, the eldest son of the principal wife succeeding to his father's position. In some cases the head wife has had no sons, then she adopted a son of one of the other wives and he became the heir. The chief's power is nominally absolute, and he is surrounded with a certain regal dignity. It is impressive to see the aristocratic majesty that a great chief can maintain. Though his regal robes may not be more than a dirty bit of blue calico, which is not worth tourpence, he walks with a scornful dignity that any European prince might envy. When he listens in court to some great indaba his face is expressionless as granite. With an affected indifference he drinks from his great calabash of beer, and ladles ounces of snuff into his nostrils, while his poor subject pleads with passion and eloquence over a matter which may mean death or life to him. Yet behind his nominal power he is controlled and restrained by the voice of his council. His succession may be plain and acknowledged, yet he cannot assume the reins of government until he has been nominated by the sub-chiefs and councillors. Our present chief had to

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643 wait for six or seven years before the procrastinating headmen
[645] could lay aside jealousies, and actually place him in the authority of his father. Then when he is crowned he cannot sit in judgment
[697] or give a decision unless his councillors have been summoned, and have deliberated with him. Many a time in the old fierce days the councillors and chief argued and defied one another for weeks at a time over the question as to whether the white man was to be tolerated in the country, and it was the strong affection of old Mombera for Dr. Laws, and Wm. Koyi which alone held in the dogs of war, and prevented his councillors from going forth on an exterminating expedition. Yet in spite of the great power of the chief he lives as father of the people with all the villagers as his children. His house is like their own, built right in the centre of
[560] the village. The poorest slave has access to him, and he hands his beer pot or his snuff to the meanest villager when he would show him friendliness.

[620] Under the paramount chief there are four great sub-chiefs, and
[634] each of them has his councillors and headmen. Then these headmen have each a group of villages under their control. They
[692] hear and dispose of petty quarrels between the villagers. Cases in which headmen are involved go to the sub-chief, and cases in which the sub-chiefs are involved, and all great tribal affairs,
645 go to the paramount chief. The tribal council is an impressive sight. Just before I came here I had the privilege of being present in one of these great gatherings of the tribe. It had met to discuss the advisability of coming under the British Protectorate. The great chief, Chimtunga, had sent out his messengers to call to council all the sub-chiefs and headmen. They marched into the
[634] chief's kraal on the appointed day, each sub-chief followed by his councillors and hundreds of armed warriors, all walking in single file, and dressed in their gaudiest clothes. They sat round the
[643] kraal till thousands were present. By-and-bye the paramount chief walked in, followed by his brothers and council. He was greeted by a roar of salutation, and took his seat. When the case was opened, and the subject introduced, the fathers of the people rose one after the other and saluted the chief, and then addressed the people. The speakers walked up and down, speaking with
[537] considerable incisiveness and eloquence, their language full of metaphors and traditional allusions. Then the chief spoke,
[535] closing the discussion. Immediately it was ended and the royal salutation given, a warrior leapt into the circle with a war cry, fell

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down at the chief's feet, and with a shout dashed up again and danced a furious war dance. His eyes fixed and staring with passion, every muscle distended, he stabbed into the air with his spear, tossed the dust of the kraal about, and leapt hither and thither in a frenzy of passion. All the while he kept shouting his battle-cry, and the thousands of fighting men around beat their spears and chanted a chorus. When he had exhausted himself, another headman leapt into the circle and went through his own peculiar wild dance, and then another and another, and for half-an-hour or more these fantastic exhibitions were maintained. Then the chief rose. A great roar of salutation greeted him. Gathering his clothes about him he walked in procession from the kraal, and the council broke up.

In the olden days the power of the chiefs was maintained by a wholesome dread of his warriors, and the laws were enforced with a consistent severity. One result of this is that the Ngoni tribe has always had a higher standard of morality than any Central Africa people. Some persons were stealing mission cattle and complaints were made to the chief. After a time a thief was caught, and then in spite of the pleadings of the missionary the highest penalty was meted out to him. He was hanged on a tree opposite the mission house, and it was forbidden to remove his body. The hyenas wore a path round the foot of the tree trying to get at the carcase, and there he hung, a terrible example to the neighbourhood, until the white ants ate the rope by which he hung, and the body fell to the waiting hyenas.

I have seen a chief receive news of the adultery of one of his wives, turn to his executioner, and give him instructions, and in a few minutes both man and woman were lying dead outside the village. I have myself begged for the life of a woman who had sinned, and she was spared only after a great fine in cattle was levied instead.

These were harsh and terrible punishments, necessary for rough times. And now when the chief is loosing some of his old authority, and dare not exercise capital punishment because of the overshadowing British Government, one fears that except where the power of religion has taken the place of the old dread, a weaker morality is apt to sap the vitality of the tribe. The punishments were not arbitrary. They were fixed by precedent. And all the past quarrels for forty or fifty years back would be quoted to prove the right of a plaintiff or defender. And now

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when the death penalty can hardly be exacted, or compensation made in the delivery over of slaves, they find it hard to satisfy demands and make a show of justice.

Now let us speak of the social life of the people. The Ngoni differ from most of the Central Africa tribes in their habit of living in large unprotected villages. The tendency of most of the other tribes is to scatter themselves in very little hamlets over a wide area, with scarcely a path of communication between the villages. Where war has harassed them they have built huge stockaded villages for their mutual protection, but as soon as assured peace has come again, the towns have split into numerous distant groups of houses. This seems to be caused by the dread and mistrust of one another which the people have through their superstitious belief in a evil eye, and in witchcraft, and through the perpetual little quarrels that arise. A carrier who was accompanying a friend of mine described this state very well when they passed a little village of four huts, and then a few hundred yards farther on an isolated hut. Holding up his hand he cried, "Look at Mr. Thumb saying to Messrs. Fourfingers, keep your distance."

The heart of a Ngoni village is the large circular cattle kraal. There all the court cases are tried, there the visitors are received, and there the dances are held. Round the kraal the village of beehive huts is built in regular rows, and then immediately outside the gardens begin. The village life takes the place of family life, and the headman is father of all the people. The boys after they have attained to twelve years of age or so live in huts by themselves, and the girls in huts on the opposite side of the village. These girls' quarters used to be most sacredly guarded, and any man found in their enclosure after dark could be killed.

The great part of the Ngoni nation consists of domestic slaves. They are people, or the descendants of people, who have been captured in raiding expeditions. But their position is not a hard one. If they are discontented they may change masters. They give their masters a little free labour, and in return are made members of his family; he espouses all their quarrels, looks after them in sickness, and shares some of his superfluity with them, but they have to share some of their necessities with him.

Polygamy was the universal custom of the people until recently. Now hundreds of polygamous unions are being dissolved every year. But in the rougher days polygamy was a necessary

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condition. It helped to maintain the comparatively high morality of the people. And it was never allowed to go to the extremes that the Tonga or others went to when a single chief would have 100 wives. The expensiveness of marriage put a limit on a man's matrimonial ambitions. Yet polygamy was essentially an evil custom. It was based on sensuality and on indolence. And when Christianity comes bringing industry, and self-restraint, it must disappear.

In the old days the chiefs would not allow the men to marry till they were over thirty, and the women were strong and full grown. This preserved the splendid physique of the tribe. But now the laxer customs of the Central Africans is telling on the Ngoni, and one of our hardest tasks is to absolutely refuse marriage to couples whom we think to be too young for this serious responsibility. I have a marriage service every Tuesday, at which I usually unite eight or ten couples in holy wedlock. But these have first of all to come to me that I must judge by appearance, for they cannot tell their ages, whether they have reached the stature of manhood and womanhood. Then if I am satisfied the banns are published and they are married.

But before a man has reached this stage, he must first pay his father-in-law a dowery for his daughter. The value of the dowery varies, according to the rank of the family into which he would marry. The daughter of a chief might be worth to her father as much as twenty cattle, while a slave might only receive two or three goats This also was a great restraint on early marriages, for a man could not marry until he had time to gain a little wealth, and pay for his wife.

The position of a wife of an aristocrat was one of considerable ease and dignity. She had to work certainly, but she had also a considerable following of slaves to assist her in her labours. But the positon of the wives of the commoners was little better than that of slaves. When the rains came on the husband sallied out with his wives. He sat on an ant hill and snuffed, and from this exalted position directed the labours of his wives who hoed.

In this the Ngoni were less noble than their neighbours, for many of the surrounding people think it is a disgrace to send the woman to the gardens. When the harvesting came, the women went to the gardens and reaped and carried home the grain, while the husband prepared the barns. And women pounded the grain and cooked it. While the men had the pleasure of eating it.

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888 [622] Yet the position of the old women of the village was a highly honoured one. The mother of the headman was almost more powerful than her son. And we always take good care when we enter a new village to win the kindly favour of the old grandmother first of all. Then we are sure we have found a way to the son's heart. One of the most beautiful things in our tribal life is the honour which is paid to the grey hairs of the village. The bent and helpless old men who lived through the glorious fighting [623] days, and understand all precedent and etiquette are the judges and councillors. And no case can be tried, no decision can be made, until the old men give their presence and their opinion. It is hard when the young are leaping ahead of their fathers through education to maintain this veneration for the elders. Yet it is the very backbone of the tribe. There is nothing more contemptible than an African or an Asiastic with a veneer of education who affects to despise the elders of the village. But I know no more pathetic sight than our afternoon schools where grey-haired men and women may be seen peering through faded eyes trying also to learn to read and keep abreast of the young and alert life, while the sun goes down in their eventide.

233 [181] The Ngoni were first of all a fighting people, and then a pastoral. Their land affords splendid pasture for cattle. And they take great pride in their herds. Round the cattle kraal centre all their ambitions, and highest delights, and best intelligence. They sit and watch the cattle going out in the early morning and coming in in the evening, and know every spot and colour of their beautiful animals. The quietest and most peaceful sight I know is when the sun goes down, and the fierce heat has [534] given place to the welcome cool of the evening. Then you will hear the music of reed pipes, and looking up you see a long line [512] of sleek, solemn cows, with large silken dew laps, and fat humps, slowly coming up the village path lowing for their calves, while boys ride on their backs sitting or standing upright, balancing themselves carefully and blowing on their pipes. Before and behind them runs a troop of goats and sheep bleating with such a human cry. In a moment the village is alive—sheep and goats are chased back and forward till they find the huts where they sleep with their masters. And boys run out with wooden pails [234] into which they milk what the calves have not sucked from their mothers.

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The art of cultivating the ground is only now being learned by the Ngoni. Formerly this was the work of the slaves. The masters know how to kill not to till. The soil is fairly rich though not nearly so fertile as what is found at the lake shore and in the deep valleys between. Maize is the great crop. But owing to the devastation of locusts for several years in succession, the Ngoni have learned to plant also reserve gardens of kasava, for the locusts and drought can scarcely affect this crop. A great variety of vegetables is cultivated, peas, beans, tomatoes, pumpkins, and so on. I have counted a variety of twenty-two different vegetables in the gardens beside one village.

These vegetables are used as relish, but the staple food is always maize porridge, and a tasty dish it is. The maize is well cleaned, ground into a fine flour, and when cooked by a clever woman makes a most tempting dish of white porridge. The relish may consist of a piece of stewed fowl or goat, or well boiled vegetable. The greatest dainty that was ever offered to me was a dish of lovely maize porridge with relish of stewed caterpillars. I did without the relish on that occasion. An interesting thing about these caterpillars is that they live on the top of trees, and the natives, to get at them, will hew down the tree. You can see how delicate a dish it makes if every caterpillar in the dish has been got at the cost of a tree. They take the place of the old European dish of peacocks cooked in their feathers.

No native thinks he has eaten until he has had his porridge. A missionary whom I know once unwisely gave a feast to his elders, feeding them on European food. They ate till they could eat no more, then stretching themselves, and after politely expressing their satisfaction by audible sounds of satiety, they rose and and said, "We must now go home to our porridge."

The maize and vegetables are grown with very little trouble, but there is also a species of millet which is largely cultivated, and at great cost to the country. The ground has to be carefully prepared, trees are hewn down in the hot season, and left to dry up in the blazing sun. The whole patch of garden is covered over with these trees and the branches, then when the first clouds appear, the wood is fired. For a day it blazes, and then during the gathering of the clouds the atmosphere is thick with the smoke of burning trees. The rains come and wash the carbon into the soil, and it makes an excellent fertiliser. But the crop exhausts the ground in two or three years, so another patch of

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243 forest is cut down and burnt, and another garden cultivated, and so the country is rapidly being deforested. The crop is largely
213 used to make a heady beer, and although Central Africa has been happily saved from the curse of European liquor, the native beer is a great source of big drunken bouts. Heavy drinking, however, does not bring the evil effects that brandy drunkenness would entail. The drink is a nutritious and a very sustaining food, I know some of the old chiefs who are drunk almost every day of their lives by midday, yet they bear up wonderfully. But
[519] these drunken bouts, when whole villages run riot, are the source of nearly all quarrels, adultery, bloodshed, and every outburst of passion. We have had to denounce the beer drinking as a menace
[117] to the social order of the country, and for lack of the strong restraint of the British Government, which forbids the cutting down of trees, we have preached against the deforesting of the land as a wicked improvidence. The native church has, of its own initiative, taken up the question, and enjoined on the members total abstinence, and the preservation of the forests.

461 Three or four months labour are sufficient to provide a family with food for the year, and the sale of a sheep or a heifer will buy all the clothes the family requires. There is therefore little necessity to work, and the tendency is to spend the months lounging about the village, talking and trifling. Now, happily a more
117 industrious period is waking, and larger ambitions for cloth and
461 for stock, are drawing out the men to work. As a mission we
797 insist on the duty of labour, we refuse church privileges to a man if he cannot show that he has been engaged for some months each year at some labour centre doing honest work. No moral good is ever effected by pampering African pride and indolence, and one of the first lessons Christianity has to teach the native, is the dignity of labour, and the absolute necessity for the labourer to be industrious and honest in the discharge of his work. A penny a day is the ordinary wage we give a labourer, and even the great majority of my 220 teachers do not receive more than 1/6 a month.

171 Of course many of the Central Africans have industries of their own, smelting, basket making, cloth weaving, wire pulling, and so on. But the Ngoni were a handless people until they got a spear in their hand. Then they drew themselves up as men, and defied the universe. Yet this martial life had an ennobling effect on them. It is a curious thing to notice, and a fact which was

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borne out in Roman days also, that the handier, and more artful and skilful people have usually a lower social morality than the fighting races. Our Ngoni came to Nyasaland as a moral blessing. The ordinary obscenity of the indigenous people was not for a moment tolerated among the Ngoni. It is very appalling to hear and see how degraded were the Tumbuka into whose land they came. A people among whom virginity was unknown, where family relationship was no defence, where men and women lived in an atmosphere that was charged with vice. But when the Ngoni came, many of the foul practices of the Tumbuka were punished with death. Their obscene dances were prohibited, many of their superstitious customs were banned, and generally a higher type of morality was superimposed.

The aristocratic Ngoni is a gentleman through and through. His word is absolute. When he gives a promise you may fearlessly rely on it. He does not steal, nor does he intrude on your privacy. I have heard the old men storm in a village because some boys stood around staring at me, or speaking. Before a superior they should sit down, and remain silent, or only speak in whispers. When they address you they always give you your family name of honour, or if they don't know it, round off each sentence with a "sire." When you come into a village you sit at the gate of the cattle kraal and wait for your reception. After a long time the elders of the village appear. Their courtesy is that the longer the wait the greater the welcome. For if they come out quickly they seem to say you had better clear out quickly. When they appear they sit down at some distance, and remain silent. You must not speak till you are spoken to. After a decent interval, they come forward, sit down, and leisurely say, "We see you, sire." Then you reply, "Yes, sire." That is the whole courtesy. Conversation may now begin. When you would rise to go, you first of all say, "Remain in peace, sire," and they reply, "Yes, and go thou in peace, sire." It is very courteous and friendly, and they accompany you along the path a little way, and again send you off with salutation.

Their village life is not without interests and amusements. During the day in the head villages there are continual trials in open court—trials which last for hours and days with continual speech-making. In the evenings the kraal echoes with the chorus of village dances. Quite the prettiest and most delightful dance is the village competitive dance which is held during the day. A

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535 challenge is sent from one group of villages to another. And on the day appointed the strangers arrive walking in procession. The girls and women are dressed in their gaudiest clothes, and their heads and arms are decked with bright coloured beads, and the claws of lions and leopards. The lads carry dancing sticks and miniature shields. The strangers open the dance. The girls standing together and holding reed wands in their hands sing in chorus, while the men arranged in a great semi-circle dance and sing. Their dance is wonderfully energetic and graceful, and is executed with a rythm and unison which is fascinating. You can hear a long way off the hundred feet come down on the earth of the kraal with a thud as of one man. When they have danced for about an hour they give way to their rivals. The home villagers step in and dance for another hour. And so on they go from ten o'clock till about four. There is no mingling of men and women. And the whole exercise is chaste, healthful, and beautiful. It is quite the show piece of our village life.

181 And now a few remarks in conclusion on their religious beliefs. I do not intend to say much on this point as one only can get at the inner meaning of their faith after long and careful investigation,

771 and with a thorough knowledge of their language. Their religion was not formulated. If you ask them about it they can tell you little or nothing. They will deny that they knew anything of God until we came. Their observances were scarcely recognised by themselves, they were the spontaneous and almost unconscious expression of a people groping after the unknown God if haply they might find Him. They recognise a spirit who presides over the universe.

776 They have a name for Him which means the great great one. But the ordinary name is the one which south of the Zambesi is used for all white men, and seems also to imply some feeling of wisdom and greatness. But they seem to have no idea of God's imminence in the world. He is rather the mighty far away Spirit

771 to whom men cannot come. Along with this, homage is made to great mountains and ancient trees, and to the strong elemental forces, as thunder and lightening. But this seems to me to be an

[777] addition which has come through their residence among the Tumbuka.

769 The great pervading article in their religious life is reverence and dread of the ancestral spirits. The whole land is full of their presence. And offerings are continually made to them to appease

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their anger and propitiate them. Yet this recognition is not made in any degree of affection but in the times of dark necessity. When the rain has not fallen, when locusts swarm and eat up their crops, when sickness and death are abroad in the village, the spirits are working out their vengeance for being neglected. Then they are remembered and sacrifice is made. There are also certain ceremonial observances on important occasions. Before the gardens are hoed, and when the reaping time draws near; if an army is going out to battle, or when a coronation takes place, then prayer is made. The confusion of the old and new ideas was amusingly illustrated at the last coronation ceremony, when Mperembe, the eldest sub-chief, sacrificed a bull, and offering it to the spirit of the dead chief prayed him to bless the new chief, then added, "and, O Mombera, bless the teachers when they go about teaching the people the words of God." There was something very beautiful in this recognition of Christianity as but a fuller shining of the dim light they had.

Their old men are full of stories and traditions, some of them are uncommonly like the stories of Uncle Remus, and others with a curious echo of Old Testament story. There is a hill near Ekwendeni, where tradition says a great tower was built by the Tumbuka to reach into the moon. But the white ants ate away the foundation and the tower fell and the people were killed. I passed below this hill when I was on my way home, and chaffed my carriers on trying to build so great a tower with wood. They laughed, and said, "But do you know the story of the hill over there?" pointing to the north. No, I said, what is it? And they told me how that long ago the Tumbuka found the country too narrow, so they decided to climb into heaven and cultivate new gardens there. So they gathered the nation together and cut down all the trees, and began to build a huge tower on this hill. When they had got a great way up, some cried "Stop, we need build no more. Here is a ladder coming down out of heaven." And they looked up and saw great roots hanging down. So the people caught hold of these roots and began climbing hand over hand up to heaven. But suddenly while they were all climbing, the roots broke, and the nation fell to the earth and was snuffed out.

Like other children of nature there are men and women in the tribe who seem to have a wonderful gift of second sight. Forty years ago a regiment went out on a great raid. The witch doctor in blessing them told them that they would meet a white man

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787 rising out of the lake, this was the spirit of the fathers returned.
[177] Now they had never heard before of men with white skins. But one day when they were burning the Henga villages, suddenly they came on David Livingstone and his party on their first journey of exploration on the Lake. More than once I have heard them tell how this wicked hag had cursed her enemy and said that beneath that tree the lightning would strike her, or some other terrible prediction, and there came a strange fulfilment.
795 Such curious accidents give to witch-doctors and others a
741 dangerous power over the people. And in spite of their constant failure to bring rain, or ward off sickness and death, their reputation was kept alive by the memory of one or two ancien successes, and by playing on the terrors of the people. Unfortunately these superstitious terrors led to miserable atrocities.
695 The witch-doctor was always called in to detect crime which was not patent. He brought his poison pot with him. He might accuse whom he pleased, and the only way the accused could clear himself was by drinking the poison. If he became sick and vomited then he was innocent. If he died he was guilty. When
766 a chief died his spirit was not allowed to go to the other world alone. A great fight was organised and many were killed, that they might be with him. Or the women and slaves were taken and buried alive with him in the pit.

845 The twin children and those who cut their upper teeth before
849 their lower, or any who showed any abnormality were buried alive in the sand of the river, or were cast out to the hyenas.

These atrocities are happily becoming matters of history. We
179 seldom now hear of them, and when we do, it sends a thrill of horror through many of the people.

Now a great change is coming over the people. They are the
[643] only independent tribe in Central Africa, living under their own chiefs. But the old military days have passed away, and with them much of the great power of the chiefs. The old men see it, and shake their heads, but do nothing to readjust the state. But the young chiefs, most of whom are readers and Christians, have set themselves energetically to try and remould their government.
[639] Our most capable and powerful sub-chief, who is himself an elder of the church has recently established a regular hut tax, and has formed a police force. His police bring criminals to justice, enforce his judgments, prohibit the people from cutting down trees, and during slack seasons go through the villages, and where

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they find dirt and untidiness compel the people to turn out and sweep the village, and rebuild their houses.

Education is spreading at a great rate, and there are fifty schools already established among the people with about 7,000 scholars in attendance. These pay fees for their attendance. And so great is the thirst for reading that last year more than 4,000 volumes were bought by the people.

A Christian church is rapidly growing up, and at certain religious seasons a great congregation of over 7,000 people may be seen gathered from all quarters.

Yet it would be a pity if with this inrush of new life the old tribal characteristics were lost in a wretched caricature of European methods. There is nothing more slovenly than a lithe athletic African dressed in European cast off clothing, or more repulsive than a lad trying to be an Englishman when he should be an Ngoni proud of his nationality. And this is one of the most serious problems that is constantly before us, to guide this people in their formative period, that in the end they may not be denationalised, and made hideous and ridiculous in a distorted and unnatural mould, to preserve all national customs which are not evil in themselves and yet evolve a people honest, industrous, intelligent, and Christian, who will have some harmonious and beautiful part to take when the world's orchestra is filling up to play its symphony of peace and prosperity.